

Common Diabetic Eye Diseases

For those living with, or at risk for diabetes, an annual dilated eye exam is a simple and non-invasive way to detect or delay eye disease and vision loss caused by diabetes. The longer you have diabetes and the less controlled your blood sugar (blood glucose) levels are, the more likely you are to develop eye complications.

As part of a comprehensive eye exam, pupil dilation allows your eye doctor to see the entire retina. Early detection, timely treatment, and appropriate follow-up care with an eye doctor (optometrist or ophthalmologist) can reduce a person's risk for severe vision loss from diabetic eye disease by 95%.

Common diabetic eye diseases include:

Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is a general term for all retina conditions caused by diabetes. Symptoms may not always appear, but common symptoms include:

- Floaters
- Blurred vision
- Distorted vision
- Impaired colors
- Empty areas in your vision
- Vision loss

High blood sugar (blood glucose) levels can damage blood vessels in your retina (a thin layer of tissue lining the back of the eye). This can lead to a blockage of the blood vessels that nourish the retina. As your eye tries to grow new blood vessels, they do not properly develop and as a result, may swell and leak fluid.

Treatment

Your doctor will help you determine ways to improve your diabetes management. If diabetic retinopathy is mild or moderate, managing your blood sugar can often slow the progression of the problems. Other treatment options include eye injections, eyedrops, laser treatment or surgery.



Diabetic Macular Edema

Diabetic Macular Edema occurs when the tiny blood vessels in the retina leak fluid into the macula, which is where focusing occurs. As the macula swells with fluid, vision blurs and colors may appear washed out.

Treatment

Your doctor will help you determine ways to improve your diabetes management. Other treatment options include eye injections, eyedrops, laser treatment or surgery.

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Cataracts

A cataract causes the lens in your eye to become cloudy. Most cataracts are associated with normal changes in your eyes as you age. They are caused by the breakdown of proteins in the lens of your eye. You may experience cloudy or blurry vision, faded colors, halos around lights, difficulty seeing at night or double vision. Cataracts are more common and occur earlier in people with diabetes.

Treatment

Cataract surgery is needed to remove the clouded lens and replace it with a new, artificial lens.

Glaucoma

People living with diabetes are at higher risk to develop glaucoma. Glaucoma occurs when pressure builds up in the eye. This pressure pinches the blood vessels to the retina and optic nerve, damaging both and resulting in vision loss. You may experience, headaches, eye pain, watery or red eyes, halos or blurred vision.

Treatment

Your doctor will help you determine ways to improve your diabetes management. Other treatment options include eye injections, eyedrops, laser treatment or surgery.

Contact your eye doctor today to schedule your comprehensive eye exam. To learn more about eye health and find an eye care provider near you, visit eyehealth.diabetes.org

